

Canadian Ag-conservation Policy (ALUS) & Perpetual Wetland Easements (AAP)

A FINAL CLOSEOUT REPORT FROM THE DELTA
WATERFOWL FOUNDATION PREPARED FOR THE LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
ALTERNATIVE LAND USE SERVICES	4
ONGOING DEMONSTRATION EFFORTS: MANITOBA AND ONTARIO.....	4
Manitoba: Rural municipality of Blanshard ALUS demonstration project	4
Ontario: Norfolk County ALUS Demonstration Project	5
 ADDITIONAL ALUS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	 7
Alberta—County of Vermilion River (CVR) ALUS Demonstration Project	7
Saskatchewan: Pilot Project Development	9
 NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN.....	 10
 ADOPT A POTHOLE	 11
Air photo of Conservation Agreement.....	12

Executive Summary

July 1, 2008 marked the beginning of a new relationship between Delta Waterfowl and the duck hunters of Louisiana. For six years prior to this date, the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission generously supported Delta's duck production effort of seasonal predator removal in the prairie breeding grounds of North Dakota. Beginning on July 1, 2008 the LWF Commission directed funds towards Delta's Canadian ag-conservation policy and perpetual wetland easement programs: Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) and Adopt A Pothole (AAP).

ALUS and AAP represent a complimentary mix of Canadian habitat initiatives. The Canadian habitat base and breeding duck productivity have been in decline since the 1950s, with no end in sight due to ongoing wetland drainage and other land conversion changes. In concert, Adopt A Pothole protects wetland habitat in perpetuity, setting the stage for a Canada-wide habitat program like ALUS to significantly impact duck production through practices such as wetland and grassland restoration and protection.

We believe ALUS is the best and most promising agricultural policy tool on the table today in Canada, and has the potential to bring positive landscape-level change for ducks and Louisiana duck hunters. The time is now for ALUS, and in spite of the challenges facing this new initiative, we are confident that the LDWF and our farm partners can make ALUS become reality. Currently, ALUS enjoys enormous and growing grassroots support. Urban Canadians are demanding a healthier environmental landscape and farm groups want to be paid to deliver it. The ALUS brand and strategy is leading the way as the first and best option to achieve this goal.

Adopt A Pothole was not only the first, large-scale perpetual wetland easement program in Canada, it's still one of the largest today. Most importantly though, we believe it is the most efficient habitat protection tool with a minimum of 80 percent of your contributions going directly to farmer payments, securing critical duck-breeding wetlands forever. Moreover, wetland acres are individually tracked, mapped and accounted for so you know exactly what your investment has accomplished.

Delta's award of LDWF FY 2009 funding totaled \$169,101 and was directed in the following allocation—ALUS: \$141,101 and AAP: \$28,000. ALUS funds were spent in the following three categories: 1) support for on-going demonstration efforts in Ontario and Manitoba, 2) development of additional demonstration sites in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and 3) support of a national and provincial outreach/media campaign. Adopt A Pothole funds were used to secure perpetual wetland easements in southwest Manitoba.

In great detail, this reports documents how LDWF funds were spent on ALUS and AAP initiatives.

ALTERNATIVE LAND USE SERVICES (\$141,101)

Over the past year, a tremendous amount of activity took place in advancing the ALUS concept towards provincial and federal adoption as official government programming. Financial support from the duck hunters of Louisiana made the following work possible.

A. Ongoing demonstration efforts: Manitoba and Ontario (\$60,976)

Manitoba: Rural Municipality of Blanshard ALUS Demonstration Project

The Manitoba ALUS pilot project was the first in Canada, and within months farmers were participating in the project at unprecedented levels. Over 75% of the farmers within the rural Municipality of Blanchard joined ALUS in the first two years, proving that conservation programs can be designed to include, on a voluntary basis, the majority of landowners within a local jurisdiction. Project evaluation studies showed that 50% of these farmers had never previously subscribed to a conservation program of any kind.

The good news for duck hunters is that wetland drainage in this key duck production area completely stopped once the project was launched, and all further losses of upland habitat were curtailed by participating farmers.

An evaluation by the University of Manitoba showed that farmers and their rural community, working with governments and conservation groups, can deliver an effective conservation program that worked to conserve duck habitat through ALUS. The study concluded that ALUS is a cost effective way to achieve conservation and that each dollar invested resulted in multiple environmental benefits.

Due to the short term nature of the Manitoba pilot evaluation (3 years), large incremental gains in habitat were not achieved. Current efforts are being conducted to extend the length of the Blanchard project, such that a wider degree of conservation treatments such as grassland and wetland restoration projects can be conducted.

The following is a detailed accounting of how LDWF funds were spent in support of the ongoing ALUS efforts in southwest Manitoba.

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1) Farm Payments: | \$20,000 |
| - Final year of payments to Blanshard farmers for actual ALUS treatments | |
| 2) Meetings with Keystone Agricultural Producers, Manitoba government staff and conservation partners in support of Blanshard ALUS pilot project: | |
| a) Rob Olson (President, organizational oversight of ALUS initiative): | \$1,476 |
| - 3 in-person meetings with KAP staff including Ian Wishart, | |

- Yvonne Rideout and Lenore Kowalchuk.
 - Regular phone conversations.
 - Ongoing project management and coordination.
 - One site visit to Blanshard project area.
- b) Robert Sopuck (VP Policy): **\$5,560**
 - Numerous in-person consultations and phone contact with KAP (>20).
 - Several in-person pilot management meetings with Blanshard ALUS partnership.
 - Regular phone contact with other partners in regards to project management.
 - Direct contact with provincial personnel regarding the potential adoption of ALUS as provincial policy, including the Manitoba Deputy Minister of Agriculture, the Assistant Deputy Minister and numerous other staff working for the department.
- c) Ian Wishart (President of KAP): **\$15,000**
 - Speaking engagements across Manitoba and Canada promoting the Manitoba ALUS project.
 - Ongoing management of project and outreach to all levels of the Manitoba Agriculture Department, including the Premier of the Province.

Ontario: Norfolk County ALUS Demonstration Project

The Norfolk County ALUS pilot project in Ontario was officially launched in January 2008, with 16 partners investing \$1 million for the 3-year study. The local community manages ALUS through a partner advisory group, consisting of farm groups, conservation organizations and provincial government departments, with the County office handling ALUS administrative responsibilities.

The Ontario ALUS project was well received by the community and local producers, immediately opening the door for ALUS partners to address some of the long-standing issues facing conservation in the County. One innovative example is the “farmer to farmer” approach tested in Norfolk County, wherein farmers from the ALUS advisory group approached their peers and neighbors to solicit their interest in participating in conservation.

Similar to Manitoba, farmers were much more motivated to join in conservation measures that were controlled locally by farm organizations and run through the community. In one area (South Creek), buffer strips and wetland restoration were implemented to improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat on 26 of 28 parcels of land along the creek. Although the Ontario DNR had identified the conservation issues on South Creek earlier, government agencies and private conservation groups were denied access to make the improvements.

The ALUS partner advisory group has established a number of fully-functioning “ALUS farms” in Norfolk County and uses farm spokespeople to explain how they made the personal transition to an environmentally sustainable farming operation. ALUS demonstration farms have won several “firsts” for conservation, including the largest restored areas of Ontario native tall grass prairie, an endangered plant community in the province. Tall grass prairie grows to over 6 feet high, providing nesting cover for ducks.

Other environmental benefits of reintroducing tall grass prairie include soil erosion control, water quality improvements and creating new habitat for species at risk. Native prairie grass is excellent dry season forage for cattle and may be pelletized as an energy source for heating or feed stock for environmentally friendly cellulosic ethanol production.

All these potential uses and benefits of native tall grass help create a market for restoring a native grassland cover type in Ontario, which will also be used by ducks. ALUS is currently the leader in prairie grass restoration in Ontario, but the demonstration farms are also restoring and creating wetlands, buffering waterways, creating pollinator habitat and restoring Oak Savannah, which is a depleted form of native prairie interspersed with oak trees. All these ecological features and cover types being restored under ALUS are important to nesting birds and environmental sustainability on farmland.

The ALUS approach achieves multiple benefits for farming, the environment and ducks with the same dollar, attracting agriculture and conservation interests in support of the project. Farm spokespeople are also talking about the transition they have undertaken through ALUS from traditional agriculture to environmentally sustainable farming.

The ALUS team has organized at least 19 demonstration farm tours since January 2008, with over 700 people from across Ontario, Canada, the US and overseas coming to visit the locations and hear about ALUS. Tours have included several elected officials from provincial and federal governments, and a full range of agriculture, wildlife and environmental interests. In addition, the ALUS Ontario team has made 28 formal presentations to agricultural and environmental organizations since official pilot launch in January 2008. Many of these people are policy influencers and decision makers.

An Ontario ALUS coalition of 78 farming, conservation and environmental groups has been organized to promote ALUS to the provincial and federal governments. ALUS was recently supported as an environmental priority for sustainable farming and local food production by the top 24 environmental organizations in Ontario and Canada.

Due to the demonstrated ability of the Norfolk model to both secure existing and establish incremental wetland and upland habitat, all future ALUS efforts (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) will use the Norfolk project as a template to guide all ALUS efforts.

An ALUS pamphlet that has received wide distribution—including all who tour the demonstration areas—is attached for your viewing (see attached electronic file titled, *Ontario ALUS pamphlet*). In addition, a detailed list of organized demonstration farm tours, ALUS speaking engagements and TV & radio interviews that were held in 2008 and thus far in 2009 is

attached (see attached electronic file titled, *Ontario tours, speaking engagements, and interviews*).

The Norfolk ALUS partnership has a well developed, highly informative website that can be viewed by visiting the following web-link: www.norfolkalus.com.

The following is a detailed accounting of how LDWF funds were spent in support of the ongoing ALUS efforts in Ontario.

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| a) Dr. Bob Bailey (VP Policy, National ALUS manager, Norfolk project manager): | \$14,040 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 7 visits to demonstration sites in Norfolk County Ontario.- Ongoing project management through daily phone contact with Norfolk project managers located on-site. | |
| b) Bryan Gilvesy (demonstration farm spokesperson): | \$2,900 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Daily contact with various levels of government and with many of the 78 partner groups involved in the demonstration.- Ongoing, on-site project management. | |
| c) Rob Olson (President): | \$1,400 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ongoing project management through constant phone conversations with Dr. Bob Bailey. | |
| d) Jim Fisher (Director of Conservation Policy) | \$600 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 1 site inspection visit (May 2009) | |

B. Additional ALUS Demonstration Project Development (\$55,427)

Alberta – County of Vermilion River (CVR) ALUS Demonstration Project

An Alberta pilot program was officially launched on 19 April 2009. The County of Vermilion River—located immediately adjacent to the Saskatchewan border—was selected as the pilot location. The Alberta pilot effort is still in the formative phases, where specific project areas are being identified, price points are being determined and project administration duties are being assigned. The launch of an Alberta pilot is certainly a break-through for ALUS in western Canada.

The following is a detailed accounting of how LDWF funds were spent in support of the establishment of an ALUS pilot project in Alberta.

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| a) Jim Fisher (CVR Project Manager): | \$7,804 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4 site visits (Jan.16, Apr.2, Jun. 1, Jun. 22) totaling 14 days | |

- on site for project setup, choosing candidates for demonstration farms, community outreach, partner outreach and initial price discovery with local farmers.
 - Regular phone contact with principal County staff contact and local project coordinator, Ms. Mona Lee Kirkland (Kirkland's time is paid for by the County).
- b) Ted Sutton (Alberta project contractor): **\$14,500**
- 3 community meetings.
 - Several meetings and presentations to the County of Vermilion River Council members and staff.
 - >15 meetings with representatives from provincial government departments including Sustainable Resource Development (i.e., game and fish department) and Environment & Transportation.
 - Draft project proposal preparation and initial outreach to local farmers in Vermilion County.
- c) Dr. Bob Bailey (National ALUS manager): **\$6,708**
- 3 site visits (Apr.2, Jun.1, Jun.22) totaling 11 days on site for project launch at County level, community/producer meetings, farm inspections for quality control, presentation to County Commissioners and planning with County staff.
 - Regular phone contact with project staff in Alberta and in Delta's Canadian headquarters in Winnipeg.
- d) Bryan Gilvesey (Norfolk ALUS demonstration farmer, lead spokesperson): **\$1,400**
- Site visit on April 2.
 - Presentation and meeting with local farmers and County staff.
- e) Bob Sopuck (VP Policy): **\$3,560**
- Numerous visits to meet with provincial farm groups (Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, Alberta Beef Producers) to enlist support.
- f) Rob Olson (President): **\$2,400**
- Ongoing contact with Delta staff overseeing project delivery in Alberta.

Saskatchewan: Pilot project development

On the heels of ALUS success in Alberta, efforts to establish a similar pilot project in Saskatchewan are being significantly increased. We plan to locate a suitable pilot location by the end of 2009 and launch a formal pilot evaluation during early-2010.

We are currently working extensively with groups such as the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation in developing and promoting ALUS within the province.

Delta was a financial supporter and presenter at an Ecological Goods and Services Symposium held in Regina, SK in March of 2009. Dr. Robert Bailey (Delta's National ALUS manager) was a session moderator and keynote speaker and the symposium. ALUS partners viewed the symposium and subsequent exposure as a big step towards delivery in the province. A full agenda from the symposium is attached for your viewing (see attached electronic file titled, *EG&S Conf Agenda - Sask - March 2009*).

An ALUS site selection proposal was developed by a Saskatchewan Project contractor and is attached for your review (see attached electronic file titled, *ALUS Proposal for Sask*). The proposal outlines in great detail the process that is currently taking place to select a pilot location.

The following is a detailed accounting of how LDWF funds were spent in support of pursuing an ALUS pilot project in Saskatchewan.

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| a) Dr. Bob Bailey (National ALUS manager): | \$8,408 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 3 site visits.- Partnership development (meetings with the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation)- Regular phone contact with project contractor.- Environmental Goods and Services Conference in Regina, SK (March 25 & 26). Dr. Bailey was a keynote speaker and moderator. Conference support. | |
| b) Saskatchewan Project Contractor: | \$4,200 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop initial project proposal.- Initial planning and candidate site/municipality selection for 2010 ALUS project launch.- Outreach to government staff in Agriculture and Environment. | |
| c) Bob Sopuck (VP Policy): | \$5,340 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Numerous meetings with the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and government staff | |

within the Departments of Agriculture and Environment to gain support for a project launch

d) Rob Olson (President): **\$1,107**

- Ongoing regular contact with Saskatchewan ALUS project team.

C. National and Provincial Media Campaign (\$24,698)

One of the founding principles of ALUS is to create a program that provides benefits to and garners support from a wide variety of Canadian interest groups (i.e. waterfowl hunters, farmers and outdoor enthusiasts)—including the urban majority of Canada.

In order to garner support from a broad range of interest groups, a provincial and national media campaign is essential. Attached to this document is a list of articles on ALUS that have appeared in various media outlets (i.e. newspapers, agricultural and hunting magazines, etc).

The following is a list of electronic attachments:

- *ALUS press - Ontario - fall 2007*
- *ALUS press - Manitoba - Fall 2008*
- *ALUS press - Ontario - Dec 2008*
- *ALUS press - California Waterfowl Assoc - Jan 2009*
- *ALUS press - Western Producer - Jan 2009*
- *ALUS & AAP press - Manitoba - Feb 2009*
- *EG&S Conf Agenda - Sask - March 2009*
- *ALUS press - Canada wide - April 2009*
- *ALUS press - Ontario - April 2009*
- *ALUS press - PEI - April 2009*
- *ALUS press - Sask - April 2009*

The following is a detailed accounting of how LDWF funds were spent in support of conducting Delta's ALUS national and provincial media campaign.

a) Rob Olson (President & ALUS communications manager): **\$9,225**

- Conference calls with ALUS team to identify communications opportunities.
- Outreach to print and radio media.
- Media information distribution.
- Receiving and conducting ALUS interviews.

b) Francoise Lord (Communications Coordinator): **\$2,800**

- Tracking and distributing ALUS information.
- Maintaining & developing media contacts.

- c) Fred Greenslade (webmaster, video production): **\$7,880**
 - Produce and distribute videos promoting ALUS.
 - Web promotion of ALUS.
 - Information distribution.
- d) Dr. Bob Bailey (National ALUS manager): **\$2,123**
 - Writing and distributing ALUS media material.
 - Receiving magazine interviews.
- e) Bob Sopuck (VP Policy): **\$2,670**
 - Writing and distributing ALUS media material.
 - Receiving magazine and radio interviews.

ADOPT A POTHOLE (\$28,000)

Delta's Adopt A Pothole (perpetual wetland easement program) efforts are conducted in partnership with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC). As part of our partnership agreement, the MHHC signs, holds title, monitors and enforces the easements—called Conservation Agreements (CAs) in Canada. This critical relationship provides a huge strategic advantage for Delta and our funding partners, as the MHHC assumes all long-term financial obligations—allowing the vast majority of contributed funds to reach the ground.

In partnership with previously leveraged NAWCA funds and MHHC in-kind services, LDWF funding was used to permanently protect 536 acres of wetland and associated upland habitat. The entire acreage was secured with one landowner in the Kenton area of southwest Manitoba at a total cost of \$53,600 (Canadian funds). A copy of the signed easement is provided for your viewing. Due to confidentiality reasons, the identity of the producer's physical address is blocked out—however, a legal description of the protected property is included.

An air photo of the secured acres is included below. In addition, please visit the following web-link to view a short video put together by Delta's Jim Fisher and MHHC's Roy Bouillon: <http://www.deltawaterfowl.org/video/LA.html>. Jim and Roy are standing in front of one of the many now-protected wetlands and give you a short history on Adopt A Pothole and this particular agreement.



Conservation agreement purchased in partnership with the LDWF, NAWCA and the MHHCA. Areas cross-hatched in black are now under perpetual protection.